

How Alfred Kinsey Armed the Early Gay Rights Movement in America with Research

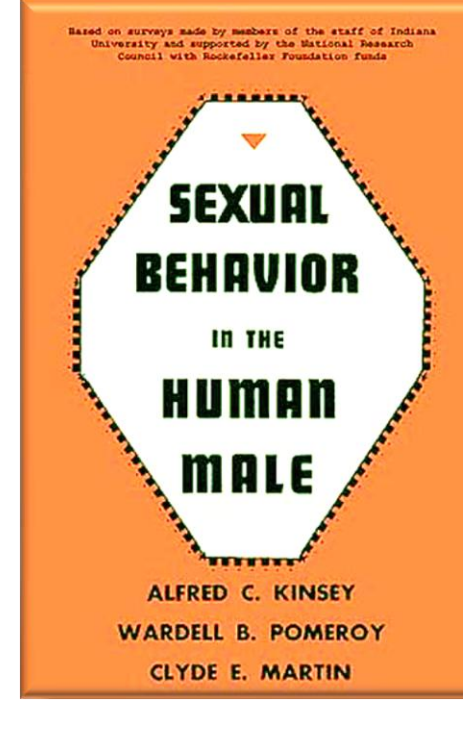
Michael Bedwell

"Civil rights shouldn't be a matter of numbers, but they are."

- Tom Stoddard, former Lambda Legal Executive Director, *The Washington Post*, 1993.

- June 27th, 2019, Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey named one of first 50 "pioneers, trailblazers, and heroes who contributed to the advancement of the LGBTQ community in a substantive way" on the National LGBTQ Wall of Honor in New York's Stonewall Inn. When his *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* was released in 1948, nothing had yet replaced Henry Gerber's Society for Human Rights, quickly snuffed out by Chicago police in 1925, nor Magnus Hirschfeld's unprecedented movement in Berlin that had inspired Gerber but literally went up in Nazi flames in 1933.
- Next to Kinsey's name on the Wall of Honor is Harry Hay's. A perfect juxtaposition as Hay credited Kinsey with something the zoologist probably never imagined—inspiring him to try to form the gay group in Los Angeles he'd long dreamed of. "His book was a shocker for us because we had assumed that we were a few hundred in every city. Turned out, we were thousands in every city that even he knew about." - *The Progressive* magazine, 1998.
- Also shocking was how many of all persuasions Kinsey convinced to confide in him and his team. Not a crime in New Hampshire, penalties in other states for "sodomy"—various non-procreative forms of sex usually but not exclusively applying to acts between men—ranged then from one year to mandatory life in prison.¹ I remember that some daring souls who actually read passages from Kinsey aloud in Pershing Square, LA's equivalent to New York's Union Square, a place for political speech that was also a cruising ground. - Wayne Dynes, editor, *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*.

The 0-6 Kinsey Scale graphed response to and/or sexual experience with the same and/or opposite sex across a continuum. Among the 5300 white males:



- 46% had "reacted to" or engaged in sexual activities with both sexes in the course of their adult lives
- 10% were predominantly homosexual between the ages of 16 and 55
- 8% were exclusively homosexual for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55
- 4% had been exclusively homosexual after the onset of adolescence up to the time of their interviews.

Man in His Element
George Platt Lynes
Kinsey Collections



Now if he's timid around the girls
But around the boys he's so sporty
His history is no mystery
It's on page two hundred and forty
No wonder Bill was always strange
And kissed me with such poise
When I asked him where he'd been,
he'd say: "Oh, out with the boys."



Six Proposals Supported by Assembly Group

Famed Dr. Kinsey Would Reduce, Not Increase Penalties

SACRAMENTO, Dec. 11 - Six proposals to tighten up the laws against sex criminals were recommended by an assembly committee tonight to the current special session of the California legislature.

The action came despite a recommendation by the author of the Kinsey report that penalties should be reduced—not increased.

The scientific subcommittee

December 1949. Kinsey tells California state assembly penalty for sodomy should be reduced not increased as proposed from 1 to 10 years to up to 20 years, and that homosexuals could not be "cured." Three months later, showing the first concrete change results of his research, assembly members quote him to the press that "between 35 and 40 percent of the male population has engaged in some homosexual activity after adolescence," and agree not to increase penalties.

1950. Following Kinsey's advice, New York's legislature reduces consensual sex between adult males from a felony to a misdemeanor.

Republican US Sen. Joe McCarthy leaps to national fame claiming 205 State Department employees are card-carrying Communists. State Department Deputy Undersecretary John Puerferry denies McCarthy's claim while noting that a number of employees fired as "security risks" included 91 homosexuals; triggering visions of traitorous perverts dancing in America's heads and a "Lavender Scare"—exploiting Kinsey's research for all the wrong reasons—begins a waltz with McCarthy and the Red Scare that will last for 45 years; costing thousands their jobs and leading some to commit suicide such as Drew Fostering who worked at the US Embassy in Paris. His lover found his body on the kitchen floor of their apartment next to the gas stove.

Solons Probing Homosexuals Had Better Read Dr. Kinsey

BY WARDSWORTH LIXLEY
WASHINGTON, Aug. 12. - The Senate subcommittee investigating the employment of "homosexuals" in the Federal Government had better read the Kinsey report before it is too late, says a group of leading homosexuals here.

Among 5940 white females: 7% of those single and 4% of those previously married, ages 20-35, were given a rating of 3 on the Kinsey Scale (about equal heterosexual and homosexual experience/response)

2 to 6%, ages 20-35, were more or less exclusively homosexual in experience/response

1 to 3% of those unmarried aged 20-35 were exclusively homosexual in experience/response.

Stereo daguerreotype
France 1850-1855
Kinsey Collections



Of all the evanglizations of the book, none was louder or more ubiquitous than Rev. Billy Graham, the first superstar evangelist, who raged in print, on his radio program, and to tens of thousands in revival meetings across the country that no *CHRISTIAN* woman would have participated in the study and that Kinsey was insulting all women and teaching "our young people moral perversions that they'd never even heard of before." Slyly calling Kinsey and his research team "secret agents" amplified the growing charges that Kinsey was "aiding the Reds by weakening America's morals."

CLICK LINK TO HEAR SERMON billygraham.org/audio/the-bible-and-dr-kinsey/

Graham Harpoons Dr. Kinsey's Aims, Calls Sex Tome Staff 'Secret Agents'

Evangelist Billy Graham last night said sarcastically, "Only the lowest night tossed an angry harpoon." Graham said that he had "probed into the lives of 10,000 women. I want to tell you porter ask her the questions these women did. There is one thing I agree with, though." Graham went on, "The moral condition of the American is at an all time low."

One of the Three Million Series

REV. BILLY GRAHAM
D.D.
"The Power of Decision"
A B.C. NETWORK

The Mattachine Society
Award of Merit

presented to
Dr. Alfred Kinsey
Institute for Sex Research, Inc.

For active promotion of individual freedom and education in the human community.

Los Angeles, California, May 15, 1954

1954. Five months after Kinsey's Mattachine Award of Merit, Post Office refuses to deliver October issue of *ONE* declaring it "obscene, lewd, lascivious, and filthy" despite magazine's pro bono attorney having vetted every word. Rebuffed by the ACLU, they sue LA Postmaster alone, and in 1958 the Supreme Court rules in their favor in the community's first great victory.

1955. Eight women in San Francisco form first American lesbian group, the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB).

Explicitly thanking Kinsey, American Law Institute publishes history-changing Model Penal Code leading to decriminalization in several states beginning with Illinois in 1961. "The Code is virtually a Kinsey document." - Kinsey biographer Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy.

His books already a benchmark for their discussions, Kinsey meets with members of Wolfenden Committee in London urging them to recommend Parliament decriminalize sodomy. "Kinsey's star status ensured that his views would carry weight." - Brian Lewis, *Wolfenden's Witnesses: Homosexuality in Postwar Britain*. Two years later they do.

1956. During a two-hour May visit to ONE's office in LA he advises group on tactics and compares their lawsuit against the Post Office with his test case against US Customs who want to incinerate confiscated erotica he'd attempted to import. SEE: <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/imh/article/view/9882/13476>

July. "Very much upset and agitated," US Senator Gordon Allott (Republican-Colorado) forwards a Mattachine pamphlet referencing Kinsey they'd sent him to the FBI.

in case you didn't know

Sex Researcher A. C. Kinsey Dies
I. U. Zoology Professor World-Famed As Controversial Author Of 2 Volumes

KINSEY, FAMED SEX SECRET PROBER, DIES
Dr. Alfred Kinsey, Dr. Kinsey, Author of Sex Behavior Books, Is Dead

one
A Tribute to Dr. Kinsey

His seven-page tribute read, "To the staff and readers of *ONE*, his death is an immeasurable loss, deeply and personally felt. We shall always be grateful for the legacy that he left us. Each of us is richer for having seen and known a truly great man. Society's debt to Kinsey is immeasurable. Homosexuals, above all, are deeply indebted.

Mattachine Review read: "It goes without saying that Mattachine and all its members and friends have lost a valued counselor and adviser with Dr. Kinsey's passing. His helpfulness to Mattachine leaders will never be forgotten."

In the first issue of DOB's *The Ladder*, Dr. Harry Benjamin whom Kinsey had inspired to devote his practice to transgender people wrote, "The world has lost an outstanding scientist and a champion of human freedom and happiness."

"He was the Rosa Parks and the Martin Luther King and the Thurgood Marshall of the gay rights movement."

- Yale Law School professor William Eskridge, Jr.

A year after Kinsey's death, a brilliant Harvard-trained astronomer who dreamed of becoming one of the first astronauts is fired by the Army Map Service and blackballed from any other government job for being gay. He had never been involved in gay activism, but what he did next and for decades after earned him a place on the National LGBTQ Wall of Honor. He is the first known Lavender Scare victim to not just fight their firing in court but all the way to the Supreme Court. In his blazing brief he wrote himself, inspired as Harry Hay was, he hurled Kinsey's research at the justices—and an unprecedented torrent of contempt for government-sanctioned homophobia and discrimination. Denied certiorari, he was soon appealing to newly inaugurated President John F. Kennedy, and teaching him about Kinsey. As he did in letters to every member of Congress and every other senior government official announcing the formation of the Mattachine Society of Washington (MSW). It had no formal relationship to original Mattachine which had abandoned the "chapter" system. More importantly, Kamenny fashioned MSW as an aggressive organization that would not plead for but demand equal treatment. In 1965 he led the first gay rights protests in Washington at the White House, the Pentagon, the State Department, Civil Service Commission, and in front of Independence Hall in Philadelphia in which Kinsey references sprang from his letters and speeches to picket signs now in the Smithsonian. "FIFTEEN MILLION U.S. HOMOSEXUALS PROTEST FEDERAL TREATMENT"—QUARTER MILLION HOMOSEXUAL FEDERAL EMPLOYEES PROTEST CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION POLICY—"65,000 HOMOSEXUAL SAILORS DEMAND NEW NAVY POLICY"—QUARTER MILLION HOMOSEXUAL AMERICAN SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN PROTEST ARMED SERVICES POLICIES." Year after year, like Johnny Appleseed, he traveled from town to town planting the seeds of Kinsey's insights among new generations, including at Indiana University in 1974. He succeeded in getting some gays fired by the government reinstated. The Civil Service Commission finally surrendered, calling him to say they would no longer use homosexuality as a reason for dismissal. He overturned DC's sodomy law and led the successful fight to convince the American Psychiatric Association to declare homosexuality not an illness. Prof. Eskridge credits him with birthing the Gaylegal equality arguments still used in court cases today.



Associates with the State Dept carried over into the State Dept—a harmful relic? Let us examine the Kinsey report.

1955. Eight women in San Francisco form first American lesbian group, the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB).

Explicitly thanking Kinsey, American Law Institute publishes history-changing Model Penal Code leading to decriminalization in several states beginning with Illinois in 1961. "The Code is virtually a Kinsey document." - Kinsey biographer Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy.

His books already a benchmark for their discussions, Kinsey meets with members of Wolfenden Committee in London urging them to recommend Parliament decriminalize sodomy. "Kinsey's star status ensured that his views would carry weight." - Brian Lewis, *Wolfenden's Witnesses: Homosexuality in Postwar Britain*. Two years later they do.

1956. During a two-hour May visit to ONE's office in LA he advises group on tactics and compares their lawsuit against the Post Office with his test case against US Customs who want to incinerate confiscated erotica he'd attempted to import. SEE: <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/imh/article/view/9882/13476>

July. "Very much upset and agitated," US Senator Gordon Allott (Republican-Colorado) forwards a Mattachine pamphlet referencing Kinsey they'd sent him to the FBI.

The government's regulations, policies, practices and procedures, as applied in the instant case to petitioner specifically, and as applied to homosexuals generally, are a stench in the nostrils of decent people, an offense against morality, an abandonment of reason, an affront to human dignity, an improper restraint upon proper freedom and liberty, a disgrace to any civilized society, and a violation of all that this nation stands for. These policies, practices, procedures, and regulations have gone too long unquestioned, and too long unexamined by the courts.

Sex Researcher A. C. Kinsey Dies
I. U. Zoology Professor World-Famed As Controversial Author Of 2 Volumes

KINSEY, FAMED SEX SECRET PROBER, DIES
Dr. Alfred Kinsey, Dr. Kinsey, Author of Sex Behavior Books, Is Dead

one
A Tribute to Dr. Kinsey



One out of 10 a homosexual, gay tells crowd

Dr. Alfred Kinsey, pioneer in sex research, said today that one out of 10 Americans is a homosexual.

Dr. Kinsey, who has been a pioneer in sex research since the late 1930s, made the statement at a news conference here today.

He said that his research, which has been widely reported in the press, has shown that about 10 percent of the population is homosexual.

Dr. Kinsey said that his research has shown that about 10 percent of the population is homosexual.



He also gave the movement its first motto. One we believe Kinsey would agree with. For beyond the ivy-covered walls where others still debate how many homosexuals he actually found on the head of a pin, he armed lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals not just with numbers but with feelings of self-worth, something no court or politician can take away.

"Reaching puberty, in Australia, in about 1950, I did not have to confront a belief in the wickedness of my own homosexual inclination (which somehow seemed perfectly natural to me) in quite such a lonely state as would have been the case before Dr. Kinsey's report was made public.

It was a calming thing to learn that I was not, after all, alone."
- Hon. Michael Kirby, AC CMG, Retired Justice, High Court of Australia

A middle-aged woman being interviewed toward the close of the 2004 film *Kinsey* expresses what countless others in real life must have felt since 1948.

Click link to watch:
<https://youtube.com/embed/61oNNvYwTU?autoplay=1>



LGBTQ WALL OF HONOR
Honoring Pioneers, Trailblazers, and Heroes

Gay novelist Samuel Steward supplied Kinsey with many contacts and swaths of information, becoming a close friend and calling him "Dr. Prometheus. He brought fire and light to the world. We looked upon him as a savior. He was *OUR* Stonewall."